



## Healthy Weight, Nutrition, and Physical Activity

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# Losing Weight

### Food Assistance and Food Systems Resources

Healthy weight isn't about following a diet or program. Instead, it involves a lifestyle with healthy eating patterns, regular physical activity, and stress management.

People with gradual, steady weight loss (about 1 to 2 pounds per week) are more likely to keep the weight off than people who lose weight quickly.

Sleep, age, genetics, diseases, medications, and environments [may also contribute to weight management](#). If you are concerned about your weight or have questions about your medications, talk with your health care provider.

## Getting Started

Losing weight takes a well-thought-out plan. Here's how to get started.

### Step 1: Make a commitment

Whether you have a family history of heart disease, want to see your kids get married, or want to feel better in your clothes, write down why you want to lose weight. Writing it down can confirm your commitment. Post these reasons where they serve as a daily reminder of why you want to make this change.

### Step 2: Take stock of where you are

Write down everything you eat and drink for a few days in a [food and beverage diary](#). [PDF-127KB] Being more aware of what you eat and drink will help you avoid mindless consumption. [Tracking physical activity](#) [PDF-51KB], sleep, and emotions can also help you understand current habits and stressors. This can also help identify areas where you can start making changes.

Next, examine your lifestyle. Identify things that might pose challenges to your weight loss efforts. For example, does your work or travel schedule make it hard to get enough physical activity? Do you find yourself eating sugary foods because that's what you buy for your kids? Do your coworkers often bring high-calorie items, such as doughnuts, to the workplace? Think through things you can do to help overcome these challenges.

If you have a chronic condition or a disability, ask your health care provider for resources to support healthy weight. This may include referral to a registered dietitian and other clinical or community programs, federally approved medications or devices, or surgery. Ask for a follow-up appointment to monitor changes in your weight or any related health conditions.



## Step 3: Set realistic goals

Set short-term goals and reward your efforts along the way. Maybe your long-term goal is to lose 40 pounds and to control your high blood pressure. Short-term goals might be to drink water instead of sugary beverages, take a 15-minute evening walk, or have a vegetable with supper.

Focus on two or three goals at a time. Effective goals are —

- Specific
- Realistic
- Forgiving (less than perfect)

For example, “exercise more” is not specific. But “I will walk 15 minutes, 3 days a week for the first week,” is specific and realistic.

Setting unrealistic goals, such as losing 20 pounds in 2 weeks, can leave you feeling defeated and frustrated.

Being realistic also means expecting occasional setbacks. When setbacks happen, get back on track as quickly as possible. Also think about how to prevent setbacks in similar future situations.

Keep in mind everyone is different—what works for someone else might not be right for you. Try a variety of activities such as walking, swimming, tennis, or group exercise classes. See what you enjoy most and can fit into your life. These activities will be easier to stick with over the long term.

### Even Modest Weight Loss Helps

Even modest weight loss  [PDF-5.9MB]  can mean big benefits such as improvements in blood pressure, blood cholesterol, and blood sugars.

For example, if you weigh 200 pounds, a 5% loss is 10 pounds, dropping your weight to 190 pounds. This modest weight loss can decrease your risk for chronic diseases related to obesity.

## Step 4: Identify resources for information and support



Find family members or friends who will support your weight loss efforts. Coworkers or neighbors with similar goals might share healthy recipes and plan group physical activities. Joining a weight loss group or visiting a health care professional such as a registered dietitian may also help.

## Step 5: Continually monitor your progress

Revisit the goals you set in Step 3 and evaluate your progress regularly. Evaluate which parts of your plan are working well and which ones need tweaking. Then rewrite your goals and plan accordingly.

If you consistently achieve a particular goal, add a new goal to help you continue your pathway to success.

Reward yourself for your successes! Recognize when you're meeting your goals and be proud of your progress. Use non-food rewards, such as a bouquet of fresh flowers, a sports outing with friends, or a relaxing bath. Rewards help keep you motivated on the path to better health.

### For More Information

#### [Treatment for overweight and obesity](#)

Common treatments for overweight and obesity include losing weight through healthy eating, being more physically active, and making other changes to your usual habits.

#### [Choosing a safe and successful weight-loss program](#)

Tips on how to choose a program that may help you lose weight safely and keep it off over time.

#### [Prescription medications to treat overweight and obesity](#)

If lifestyle changes do not help you lose weight or maintain your weight loss, your health care professional may prescribe medications as part of your weight-control program.

## [Bariatric surgery](#)

Weight-loss surgery, also known as bariatric surgery, is an operation that makes changes to the digestive system.

## [Body Image](#)

Creating a positive body image through healthy eating habits.

## [Strategies for Success](#)

Find resources to help you lose or gain weight safely and effectively.

## [Weight Management for Youth](#)

Address weight issues in children and teens with healthy guidelines, links to interactive and skill-building tools, and more.

## [What you should know about popular diets](#)

Learn how to evaluate claims made by weight loss products and diets. Find information to choose weight loss strategies that are healthy, effective, and safe for you.

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